

steam as the steam and hot gas exit said discharge end of a respective nozzle.

Remarks/Arguments

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-13 are pending in this application.

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected, claim 3 stands objected to and claims 4-13 stand allowed.

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected based on 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Staheli (6,109,008) in view of Sijbring (3,636,939), with the Examiner considering that it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art, at the time the invention was made, to have used the steam generator of Sijbring for that of Staheli. It is respectfully submitted that claim 1, as now presented, defines patentably over this combination of references.

Specifically, among other structure, claim 1 now requires the step of maintaining the temperature of the stream of steam and gas substantially at the **minimum temperature** required for the steam to remain in a gaseous state until it contacts the crop to be re-hydrated.

Staheli '008 teaches the idea of re-hydrating dry crop with steam but is completely devoid of any teaching that the temperature of the steam should be maintained substantially at the minimum temperature required for the steam to remain its gaseous state until it contacts the crop to re-hydrated.

Sijbring teaches the idea of treating living crop with a mixture of gas and steam generated by a direct-fired steam generator. While Sijbring does mention the temperature of the gaseous mixture there is no teaching for maintaining the temperature substantially at the **minimum temperature** required for the steam to remain in a gaseous state until it contacts the crop to be re-hydrated.

Thus, claim 1 is thought allowable.

Claims 2 and 3 depend from claim 1 and are likewise thought allowable, with it being noted that the Examiner considers claim 3 to contain allowable subject matter.

Claim 2 is thought allowable for the additional reason that it requires the mixture of steam and hot gases to be mixed together to form a **substantially homogeneous mixture**, and no such mixing is taught by either of Staheli or Sijbring.

In conclusion, it is believed that this application is in condition for allowance, and such allowance is respectfully requested.

Any fees or charges due as a result of filing of the present paper may be charged against Deposit Account 04-0525. Two duplicates of this page are enclosed.

Respectfully,

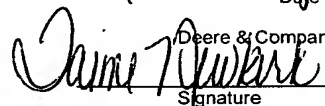


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